

Understanding Ukrainian young people's current concerns, needs and hopes:

looking ahead to a future
rebuilding of Ukraine

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The interpretations offered in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the British Council, its officers, or those individuals who contributed to the research. Similarly, the authors take full responsibility for any errors.

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Please note that the individuals shown in the photographs included in this report are not the participants of the focus group discussions.

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Foreword

I am pleased to commend this comprehensive report on the current issues faced by Ukrainian youth. This research sheds light on the profound and multifaceted impact that Russia's war against Ukraine has had on young Ukrainians, revealing the overwhelming challenges they face daily.

The findings are both sobering and enlightening. It is of no surprise that Russia's war has had a life-altering impact on all the respondents, and it is concerning to learn about the significant deterioration in their quality of life, and the severe psychological and emotional challenges that they face. Disruption to social and educational normality is particularly acute and multiplies the direct effects of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

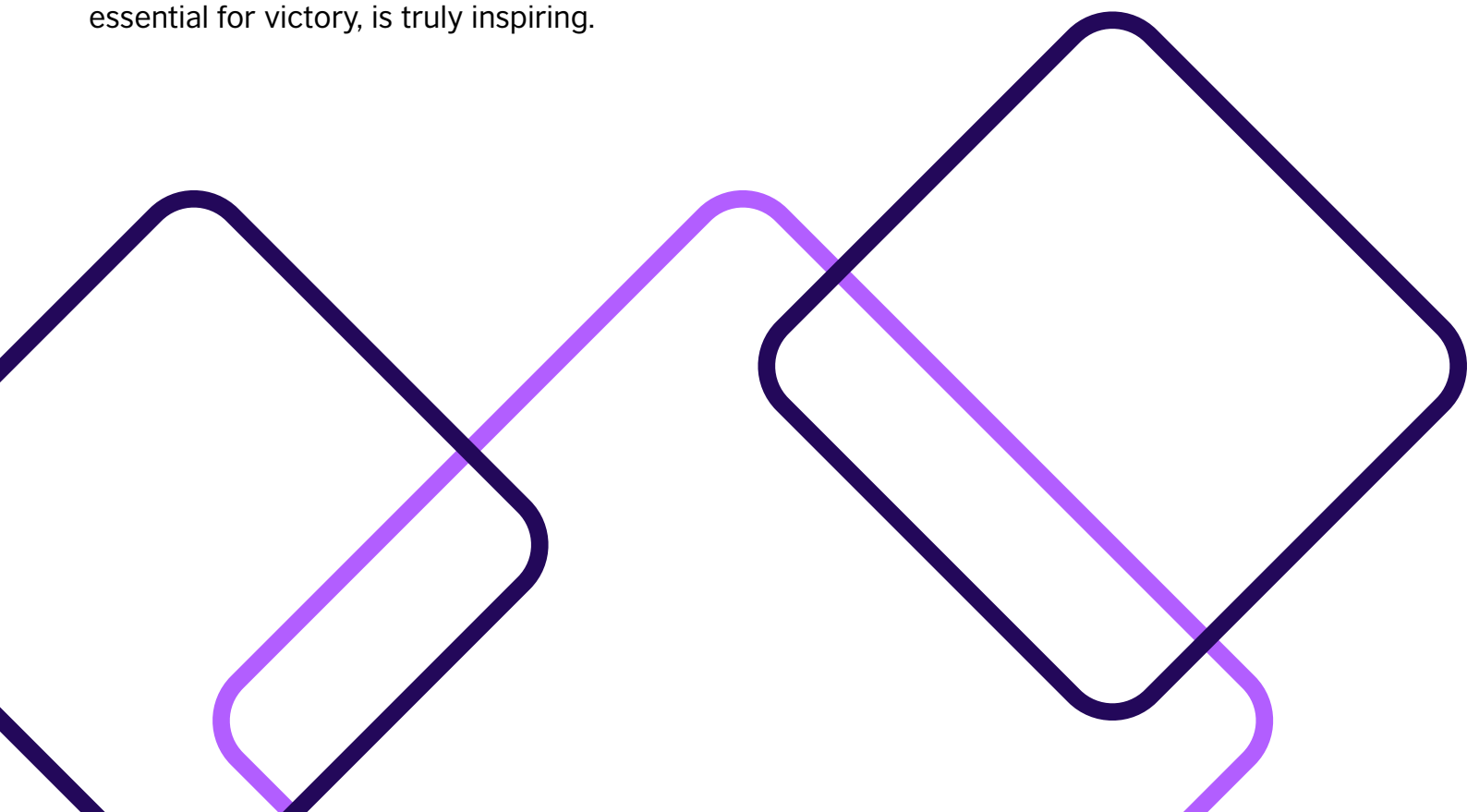
At the same time, it is clear that despite all of the uncertainty in their lives, there is a strong desire among young Ukrainians to remain in their homeland. They believe in Ukraine's victory and reconstruction, driven by grassroots efforts, and supported by strong, internationally connected government agencies. Their optimism about joining the EU and NATO, and their view of international support, reforms, and domestic unity as essential for victory, is truly inspiring.

The UK will continue to support Ukraine to deal with the complex, interconnected needs of young Ukrainians. We are developing long-term partnerships between our two countries across a range of areas including human rights, gender equality, social inclusion, social protection, culture, education and sport, all of which when taken together will, we hope, make an enormous contribution to improving the daily lives of millions of young people in Ukraine.

In particular, I would like to commend the British Council and all our friends and partners involved in cultural, educational, and social programming for their dedication to supporting Ukrainian youth. Your efforts are vital in helping these young individuals navigate the challenges they face and in building their future Ukraine.

Martin Harris CMG OBE

His Majesty's Ambassador to Ukraine



Executive summary

Methodology

The report is based on an in-depth qualitative study, conducted after analysing existing research. The methodology included two stages.

At the first stage, the research team conducted a comprehensive literature review to identify key gaps and shape research questions, focusing on youth public opinion in conflict areas.

As the previous studies mainly used quantitative methods, lacking qualitative depth, this report employed qualitative methods, including six online focus group discussions (FGDs) and ten in-depth interviews (IDIs) – this was the second stage of the research process. FGDs were held across three macro-regions of Ukraine (west, east, and centre), and IDIs targeted vulnerable youth groups. Two FGDs were conducted in each macro-region, one in a big city and one in smaller towns or rural areas, with equal gender representation. FGDs targeted two age groups: 14–19 and 20–35, including two Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in each group. IDIs focused on vulnerable youth, such as disabled, Roma, LGBTQ, military, and youth abroad. These interviews allowed for comfortable and sincere discussions.

Finally, at the data analysis stage, transcripts of FGDs and IDIs were analysed according to interview guide themes and literature review insights. A native Ukrainian speaker ensured accurate interpretation of original texts. The Youth Sounding Board (YSB), consisting of four young Ukrainian leaders, validated the research findings, ensuring youth voices were central in design and implementation.

Findings

The research reveals the profound and multifaceted impact of the ongoing war on young Ukrainians. The war has **overwhelmingly negative effects**. Over half of respondents rate the impact of war as extremely high. Key areas of negative impact include a significant deterioration in quality of life, severe psychological and emotional challenges, and the disruption of social connections and educational processes. Vulnerable groups, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs), face additional hardships like accommodation issues and high living costs.

The research identified the following interconnected **primary needs**:

- **Security:** A psychological feeling of safety determined by both the absence of violence and the stability offered through employment and secure housing.
- **Economic Stability:** Access to employment and financial stability.
- **Accommodation:** Access to quality living conditions, housing security, and stable rental prices. Accommodation is a particularly acute need for IDPs and those with diminished incomes.

Young Ukrainians cited **concerns** that are closely linked to these needs. The most significant concerns identified are the security and the health of relatives, the unpredictability of the future, and the threat of further Russian occupation. Younger respondents also identified the war's impact on their education and the broader implications for their future as a concern.

The research identified a notable cultural shift amongst the youngest participants. This **cultural shift** consists of the abandonment of Russian cultural exports and an increase in patriotism and national identity. This shift is accompanied by a tightening of social circles due to the consolidation of a Ukraine-centric

mindset and lack of tolerance towards pro-Russian views among young people.

When asked about **plans and aspirations** for the future, respondents revealed the following:

- Planning for the future is fraught with uncertainty, with many young people unable to make long-term plans. Their life planning horizon is typically limited to one month, heavily influenced by the war's progression.
- Despite the uncertainty, younger respondents show a strong desire to remain in Ukraine.
- There is a **widespread belief in Ukraine's eventual reconstruction and victory**, driven by grassroots efforts rather than reliance on the state. Young Ukrainians remain optimistic about joining the EU and NATO, viewing international support, reforms, and domestic unity as essential for victory.

Overall, the findings highlight the urgent need for comprehensive support for Ukraine's youth, addressing their immediate needs while fostering resilience and hope for the future. The findings cover a wide range of issues including cultural engagement, support for survivors of violence, educational needs, inclusion and funding for recovery, all of which have important implications for policymakers and delivery staff of the British Council's programmes in Ukraine as well as other policymakers and donor organisations involved in supporting Ukrainian youth.

Recommendations

The recommendations aim to address issues identified during the research and data analysis phases and are targeted at the British Council and other stakeholders involved in cultural, educational and social programming involving or concerning young people in Ukraine. These recommendations collectively aim to build resilience, enhance educational and psychological support, and foster inclusive engagement among Ukraine's youth, ensuring their sustained development and empowerment both amidst the war.

Recommendation 1: Prioritise local cultural and educational events and activities with young people's active engagement

- Involve young people in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of youth evaluation youth programmes in Ukraine.
- Offer youth engagement courses, including project management, and participatory approaches as part of non-formal education offers in Ukraine.
- Advocate for participatory approaches with active youth engagement when it comes to youth programming.

Recommendation 2: Include survivor support components in all programmes

- Offer mental health support services to staff, volunteers, and participants for programmes in Ukraine.
- Include a trauma recovery/resilience module in each programme wherever possible.
- Consider the impact of the war and trauma

on each educational programme when preparing a course curriculum.

Recommendation 3: Provide additional support for vulnerable groups, enabling their participation in further activities

- Conduct a full 'inclusion feasibility study' before each programme or activity is initiated to screen for potential inclusion issues.
- Adjust programmes to the needs of vulnerable groups.
- Provide material and content support to vulnerable groups interested in participating in the programme or activity.
- Rely on local grassroots networks to better understand the best ways to support vulnerable groups.

Recommendation 4: Provide specific projects, and activities with for teaching staff, to improve the quality of education provision during wartime

1) Programme sub-area: Schools

- Include professional psychological support to the participants involved in any cooperation project. This aims to help teachers overcome continuous stress and enable their participation in the projects.
- Organise and support training and programmes for teachers who have been displaced so they can find teaching jobs in their new place of residence. These actions require cooperation with multiple stakeholders, such as local authorities; state administrations of the temporarily occupied areas (despite the occupation, these administrations are renewed and function on GCA and try to keep the record of school-related issues) and international organisations and local NGOs.

2) Programme sub-area: Higher education

- Enhance cooperation with academic staff in regions suffering most from the invasion and war-related damages (eastern, northeastern and southern Ukraine) to support their emotional well-being and to

establish perspectives for the future for higher education in post-war Ukraine

- Showcase achievements and successes of local academics during the war to war to provide emotional support and share valuable experiences. This would involve creating platforms or events e.g. conferences, webinars, or online articles where local academics can share how they managed to continue teaching, researching, and producing outputs under challenging conditions.
- Roll out non-formal education programming in flexible and inclusive formats (pre-recorded videos, webinars) to provide inspiration and practical guidance for higher education staff, showing them how to apply non-formal education methods in their teaching practices.

Recommendation 5: Where possible, online activities should be replaced or augmented with in-person activities

- Where possible, move to in-person activities.
- Where in-person activities are not possible locally, move to the nearest possible location, preferably within Ukraine to avoid international travel which is costly and can be exclusionary.
- Where possible, ensure flexibility of delivery mode, e.g. preparing materials for online delivery but also adaptable to in-person activities.
- For specific programmes with a regional (international) context, e.g. in arts programmes, stakeholders should ensure that ample resources are committed to activities in Ukraine that ensure accessibility and inclusion of young people with restricted mobility.

Recommendation 6: Plan cultural activities in Ukraine which reflect the growing trend to prioritise local culture

- Promote existing grant opportunities in Ukraine among the youth and/or supplement the arts programming area

with new grants designed for youth impacted by the war.

- Focus on targeting a specific audience within the youth (i.e., youth of 16–22 y.o.)
- Offer project-management training to empower youth to develop and manage local cultural projects, especially in rural areas and small towns. The most enthusiastic of the youth reported a lack of project-management skills and a lack of understanding of how to raise funds for their ideas. If unable to assist with grants, the British Council might help with strengthening the capacities of ongoing youth initiatives.

Recommendation 7: Enhance free course offering for the secondary education level

- Consider enhancing their free course offerings to wider audiences, including to those at the secondary school level and those with no formal education. This can be implemented across all programming areas – Arts, English, Education and Society/non-formal education.
- Offer curated access to diverse formats including webinars, MOOC, YouTube videos etc.
- Participate in knowledge exchange activities between education providers to share experiences of applying non-formal education methods



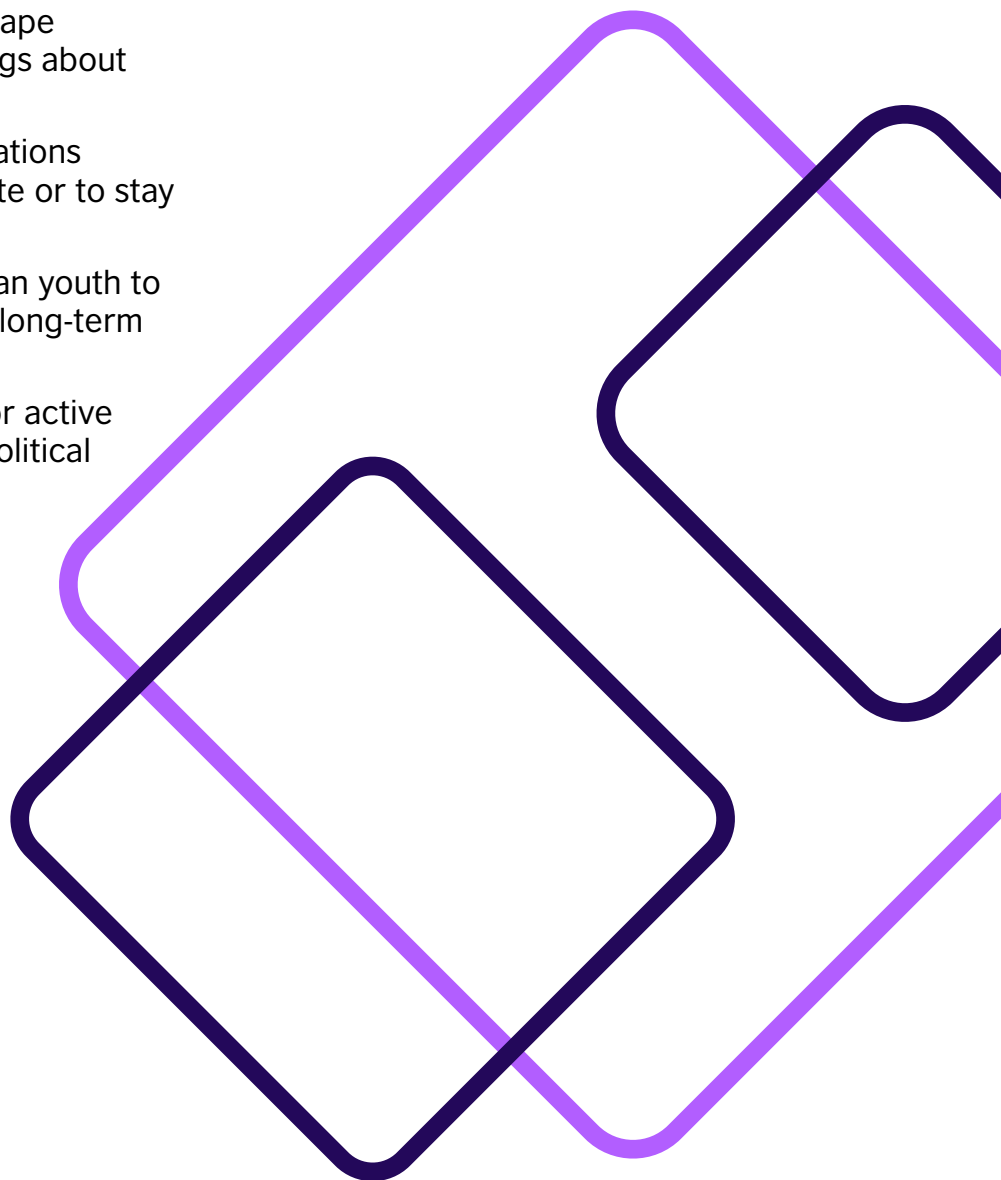
1 Introduction: About this report

Without a comprehensive picture of how Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine has impacted young people, it is impossible to fully grasp the resilience of Ukrainian society and the prospects for a post-war recovery and reconstruction. The needs and concerns of young people have changed over the course of the war depending on factors like proximity to violence, scope and type of security threats, and access to resources. This report meets the objective of providing a holistic picture of war's impact on youth life, perception of the future and potential role of youth in rebuilding Ukraine. In particular, the report presents the answers to the following major research questions:

- 1 How has youth life been affected by war in practice, what needs and concerns are prioritised?
- 2 How does experiencing war shape everyday life and impact feelings about the future?
- 3 What are the underlying motivations driving either desire to emigrate or to stay within Ukraine?
- 4 What is the capacity of Ukrainian youth to plan their lives in the short- to long-term future?
- 5 What is the youth's potential for active participation in the civic and political life in Ukraine?

These important issues are addressed in two ways: first, we present a literature review of current research on youth both in Ukraine and in other conflict affected zones, and second, we summarise the findings of a qualitative study conducted in Ukraine from January to March 2024. This report explores the relationship between the practical, material concerns of young people in Ukraine and their hope and aspirations for the future.

This study was commissioned by the British Council and implemented by the Education, Youth and Civic Engagement (EYCE) Hub at LSE Consulting, the consultancy arm of the London School of Economics and Political Science. Fieldwork was conducted by InfoSapiens, a Ukrainian research agency.



2 Methodology

This report is based on the findings of an **in-depth qualitative study**, which was designed and conducted on the basis of an analysis of existing qualitative and quantitative research. The subsequent methodology included two stages, which are outlined below.

2.1. Literature gap

The research team conducted a comprehensive literature review to identify key gaps and inform the research questions for this study. The literature review consisted of an analysis of existing academic studies, reports, and public policy recommendations. The literature under review focused on youth public opinion in conflict areas. Many cases in the sample are about Ukraine, but cases from Israel/Palestine, Georgia, and Northern Ireland were also included.

The team prioritised studies in English and Ukrainian investigating:

- The needs, concerns, feelings, and aspirations for the future among Ukrainian youth after the outbreak of the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022.
- The impact of war on youth populations in countries facing conflict or post-conflict recovery.

The literature review revealed gaps in qualitative data regarding the prioritisation of needs, concerns, and practical problems faced by young people as a result of the war. It further revealed a need to discover the underlying rationale for different perceptions of the future among young people.

These insights shaped the guides for our subsequent in-depth interviews and focus groups.

The quantitative studies included in this literature review provide an overall picture of the youth experience of conflict or post-conflict recovery but lack the depth and detail only possible in a qualitative

study. Qualitative methods allow for a more granular look at the motivation and reasoning that drives youth decision-making and how feelings and aspirations can shape such choices. Thus, the literature review led us to a qualitative study for this research.

2.2. Research Design

The studies analysed in the literature review mostly used quantitative approaches, which provide a representative picture of the youth public opinion in Ukraine and other conflict-affected or post-conflict areas. However, these studies often lacked a comprehensive qualitative explanatory component. This study, by contrast, utilises qualitative methods, including interviews and focus groups, which enable a deep dive into the public mood of Ukrainian youth. Focus Group Discussions reveal underlying motivations and rationales behind youth feelings, perceptions, and aspirations. Moreover, the in-depth interviews introduced an element of comparability as the research team spoke with a diverse range of young people, including those from vulnerable groups. The final research design included:

- 1 Six online focus group discussions (FGDs) in three macroregions of Ukraine (west, east and centre).**
- 2 Ten in-depth interviews (IDIs) with representatives of vulnerable groups among the youth.**

The research team developed guides for both the interviews and focus groups in close collaboration with the British Council and InfoSapiens, who were responsible for collecting the data. The guides had minor differences based on method and age of the respondents. However, all the guides included similar questions covering the following thematic blocks:

- Plans and aspirations;
- Needs and concerns;

- Impact of the war on daily life for young people;
- Impact on quality and accessibility of necessary services;
- Visions for the future of Ukraine and the role of youth in it.

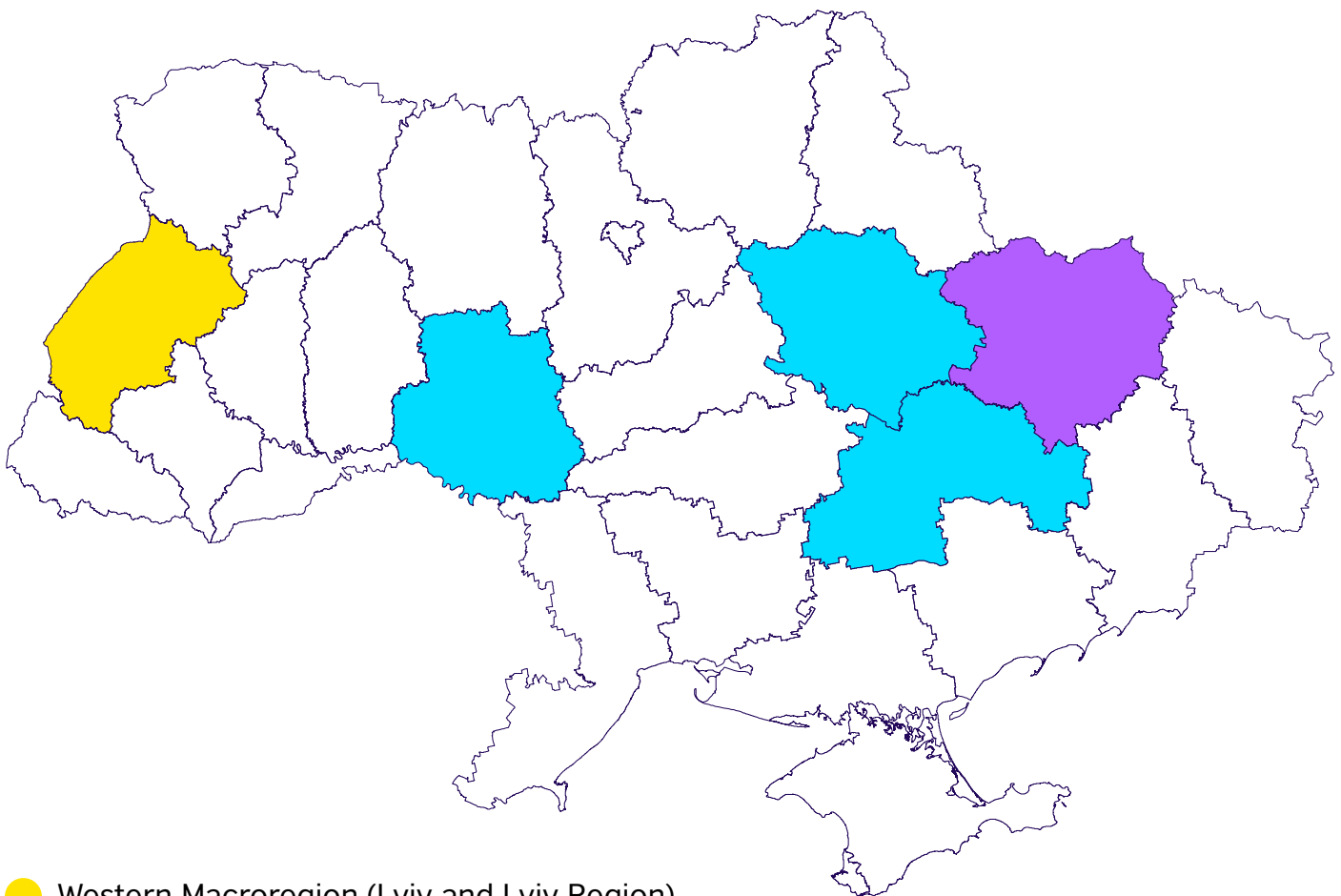
Focus Group moderators and interviewers were briefed by their supervisors at InfoSapiens and by LSE experts. LSE experts provided moderators with advice and strategies to minimise risk and harm to participants. Regular contact between those who designed the research and those who carried out the project was a priority to ensure high quality of the field work.

2.3. Data collection

The team conducted two online FGDs each in the western, eastern, and central macroregions of Ukraine. In each macroregion, one FGD was conducted in a big city and one FGD included respondents from small towns or rural areas.

The FGDs were held online for the safety of the participants as well as moderators. Each FGD was based on equal representation of male and female participants. The focus groups consisted of 14–35-year-olds, which is in line with the definition of youth in Ukrainian legislation. However, in order to reach the deepest possible understanding

Focus Group Discussion Macroregions



- Western Macroregion (Lviv and Lviv Region)
- Eastern Macroregion (Kharkiv and Kharkiv Region)
- Central Macroregion (Dnipropetrovs'k, Poltava, and Vinnytsia Regions)

of the needs, concerns, and underlying motivations for the youth feelings and plans, all the FGDs were split according to the age groups. Thus, three FGDs were held with youth aged 14–19 and three FGDs targeted youth aged 20–35. This was based on the assumption that different life circumstances, stages of life, education, and/or work might lead to different repercussions of the war on respondents' lives as well as their plans for the future. Given the mass internal displacement stemming from the conflict, each FGD included two Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Additionally, the research team conducted in-depth interviews with representatives of the most vulnerable groups of youth: disabled youth, Roma youth, LGBTQ youth, military personnel, and youth abroad under temporary protection schemes. By using in-depth interviews with these respondents, the research team could create conditions to help the respondents feel more comfortable, sincere, and open than would have been possible in a larger group discussion.

2.4. Data analysis

After receiving transcripts of the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, the research team analysed the data. The data was analysed according to the themes outlined in the interview guides, aiming to describe and explain the findings, while also considering insights from the literature review.

Although all the transcripts were translated into English, the LSE research team included a native Ukrainian speaker who worked exclusively with original Ukrainian texts to avoid possible inconsistencies in translation during the interpretation of the data.

Data analysis also included consultations with and feedback from the Youth Sounding Board (YSB) – a group of Ukrainian young people recruited by LSE Consulting to validate research findings, conclusions, and

recommendations. The aim of convening the YSB was to ensure youth empowerment and youth voice in both the research design and implementation. The YSB was formed of four young Ukrainians (two women and two men) between the ages of 18 and 34 years old. Among them were the CEO of a youth NGO, the CEO of an international foundation working on youth policy, a student cooperating with a humanitarian organisation, and a senior lecturer at one of the top Ukrainian universities and the CEO and Founder of a youth NGO.

2.5. Conclusion and takeaways on methodology

The selected methodology provides an adequate combination of tools which enables us to fill the gaps in existing research on youth public opinion in Ukraine with a more qualitative, holistic approach considering lessons taken from public opinion studies in other conflict-affected or post-conflict areas. The literature review offers a sweeping analysis of current data and studies on the youth public opinion in times of conflict. Meanwhile, the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were more granular in nature and allowed for a deeper dive into the lived experience of young people in Ukraine during the current conflict.



3 Literature Review

3.1. Ukraine

3.1.1. Review of public opinion studies and surveys

Repercussions of the war for youth

The report “Impact of War on Youth in Ukraine”¹ provides an overview of the initial repercussions of the war on young people. The project was conducted from October 2022 – January 2023 on the initiative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Ukraine, UN Development Fund (UNDP) Ukraine, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine and details youth concerns, priorities, and aspirations for the future during that period.

The study shows that the main **priorities** for Ukrainian young people at the end of 2022 did not change when compared to before the war. Young people were still focused on (1) the well-being of their families, (2) health, (3) professional development, (4) freedom of personal choice, and (5) wealth and prosperity. However, compared to 2021, the importance of each of these priorities has significantly increased. This could reflect a reassessment of values as a result of the large-scale war.

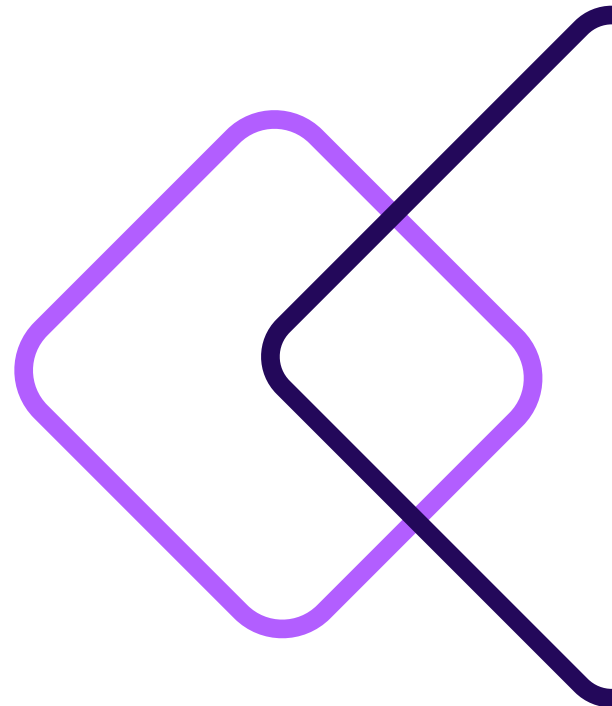
The study reveals the tangible impact of the invasion on Ukrainian youth and their feelings.² In particular, the report notes a significant increase in the number of **concerns** among Ukrainian youth in 2022 in comparison to 2021. As the war continued, the report showed elevated concerns regarding personal and family health (50% in 2022 vs. 35% in 2021); individual mental health (22% in 2022 vs. 11% in 2021); food insecurity and inability to cover basic needs (40% in 2022 vs. 23% in 2021); as well as

physical safety and limited opportunities for self-actualisation and employment. The study also reveals a slight decrease in anxiety regarding financial stability, which may reflect changing priorities rather than an improvement in financial conditions in 2022. This hypothesis is indirectly confirmed by a later survey conducted in government-controlled areas (GCA) of Ukraine by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Sociological Service of the Razumkov Centre in December 2023.³ The poll revealed that young people were less likely than the general population to experience catastrophic deterioration of the quality of their lives during the second year of full-scale war (32% felt this extreme deterioration, while on average 40% of the population faced this trend). In addition to this, youth were slightly more likely to report feeling no significant changes in their lives in 2023 (21% in contrast to 16% on average in government-controlled areas).

1 Analytical Report “Impact of war on youth”, based on nationwide research, conducted by NGO “Cedoss Analytical Center” and the research agency Infor Sapiens with the initiative and support of the UNFP in Ukraine, UNDP and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine.

2 Survey was conducted from November 21 to December 7, 2022.

3 The nationwide public opinion poll was conducted by Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation jointly with Razumkov Centre on 8–15th of December, 2023. Data on youth presented in this report was exclusively prepared and provided by the DIF team and wasn't yet published in this form.



The UNFPA/UNDP study also looked deeper into the relocation plans of Ukrainian youth almost one year into the large-scale invasion. By the end of 2022, the share of young people who choose to stay in Ukraine increased to 66% in comparison to 48% in 2021. While every fifth respondent was an internally displaced person within Ukraine, slightly more than half of them planned to return home in the future.

However, the full picture of the motives and expectations shaping youth (un)readiness or (un)willingness to emigrate from Ukraine is missing in existing literature. Consequently, our study aims to fill in the gap in understanding youth emigration plans. First of all, we explore whether emigration plans are changing over time as a result of the war. Second, we aim to elucidate the motivations behind relocation, emigration, or remaining in Ukraine using qualitative research methods. Third, we provide recommendations for Ukrainian and international stakeholders working on youth-related projects.

Based on this, we conclude that the quantitative components of previous studies on youth attitudes did not provide a holistic picture of the wide range of needs and priorities of Ukrainian youth, nor do they depict the full spectrum of problems faced by young people in conflict-affected areas.

In order to fill the gaps in existing literature and studies, we need to explore a broader picture of concerns, priorities, and plans for emigration/relocation as the war progresses. Relying on qualitative methods will allow us to explain the data from previous studies more explicitly and explore possible new trends. Information on the underlying motivations shaping perceptions of the war and plans for emigration/relocation will aid the development of projects and policymaking targeting Ukrainian youth.

Youth perspective on the possible outcomes of the war

At the end of 2022, a public opinion poll showed that young people overwhelmingly rejected both the idea of a future neutral status for Ukraine and continued Russian control over the temporarily occupied territories.⁴ None of the proposed concessions are viewed as paths towards sustainable peace. This perception is in line with overall trends in the public opinion of Ukrainian society as a whole in 2022 and 2023. Moreover, the Democratic Initiatives Foundation survey (December 2023) demonstrated that youth (18–34-year-olds) are as confident about a Ukrainian victory as other age groups. Indeed, 65% of young respondents have a strong belief in the capacity of Ukraine to win and 24% think Ukraine was likely to win, which altogether constituted 89% of youth with confidence in Ukraine's ultimate victory.⁵ In line with the rest of the population, young people tend to have positive expectations for an end to the war sooner rather than later.

Still, this optimism was not matched with reality, as the survey was conducted in December 2023 and the war is not over six months later.⁶ This underscores the need for further research to assess whether optimism is fading or whether frustration and disappointment are growing. These reports explore the priorities for youth in the context of ending the war and building peace. At the end of 2023, young people's expectations for a positive scenario to end the war included humanitarian, security, and justice components. In terms of concrete outcomes, young people prioritise the release of all prisoners of war and the return of all deported Ukrainians (69%). Indeed, this is a top priority for all of Ukraine. NATO membership for Ukraine is ranked second in terms of important outcomes and is cited as a way to guarantee security (44.5%) and prevent further aggression. This security

⁴ Analytical Report "Impact of war on youth." – p.13

⁵ The nationwide public opinion poll was conducted by Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation jointly with Razumkov Centre on 8–15th of December, 2023. Data on youth presented in this report was exclusively prepared and provided by the DIF team and wasn't yet published in this form.

⁶ Ibid. .

component is slightly more salient amongst youth respondents than amongst the general population. Third place is shared by two outcomes which were viewed as equally important to youth: persecution of all Russian war criminals (42%) and compensation for all damages caused to the economy and citizens (41%). These results are factored into our research design, which aims to determine the extent to which young people find these scenarios desirable or realistic, and how this in turn impacts levels of optimism and pessimism for personal and national futures.

Volunteer activity and civil engagement

Existing literature reveals two main findings regarding youth volunteer activity and engagement amidst a full-fledged war. There was a tangible increase in civic activity and civic engagement of the young population in 2022 according to the UNFPA/UNDP report. Civil engagement includes practical assistance to people in need on the ground (supporting soldiers, NGOs, internally displaced people), humanitarian aid, and donations.⁷ A nationwide poll, conducted by DIF in December 2023 demonstrates more active youth engagement not only in donations but also in practical volunteer assistance in comparison to other age-specific groups of the population.⁸ The share of young people engaged in various types of volunteer activities doubled in 2022 compared to 2021 (42% and 20% respectively). Moreover, around one-third of those surveyed volunteered for the first time in 2022.⁹ However, there is no qualitative research exploring the potential for sustainability of these trends, and we lack a full picture of both the motivations and long-term perspective for this civic engagement.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The nationwide public opinion poll was conducted by Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation jointly with Razumkov Centre on 8–15th of December, 2023. Data on youth presented in this report was exclusively prepared and provided by the DIF team and wasn't yet published in this form.

⁹ Analytical Report "Impact of war on youth ." – p.15

3.1.2. Review of public policy analysis and recommendations developed for Ukraine's National Youth Strategy 2030

The 2022 youth policy report on war and post-war conditions was developed by more than 25 international and Ukrainian experts, marking a critical response to the outbreak of war and the urgent need for strategic planning in youth policy within Ukraine's shifting landscape. Aligned with Ukraine's National Youth Strategy 2030, the report is meticulously divided into sections that correspond to the strategy's main priorities: safety, health, and capacity.

In the area of safety and security, the report underscores the pressing issue of physical danger to civilians, in particular the scarcity of shelters across many areas, which amplifies risks for young people who find themselves vulnerable in conflict zones. Additionally, it delves into the heightened physical danger faced by military personnel, emphasising the substantial increase in troops and casualties. This is particularly prescient as young Ukrainians play a significant role in defence efforts. Displacement challenges emerge as a critical concern, with millions forced into internal displacement and grappling with the profound crises of housing and livelihood disruptions. The report explores the breakdown of support networks and sheds light on how the weakening of family ties amidst conflict exacerbates challenges for young people and reduces their resilience in times of adversity. Economic setbacks compound these difficulties. Reduced incomes and limited job prospects add to the multifaceted burdens young Ukrainians endure. Landmines pose yet another layer of risk and vast demining efforts are required to mitigate dangers in conflict-affected areas.

In the health sector, mental health issues are cited as a significant challenge. Millions need psychological support due to war-related traumas which have exacerbated or precipitated various mental health conditions. The report also highlights the physical injuries resulting from the conflict. Thousands have suffered injuries and disruptions in healthcare access during the war. The report underscores the broader impact on healthcare infrastructure, emphasising that the extensive damage to facilities hampers medical services and exacerbates the challenges faced by young people in need of essential healthcare.

Disruptions in education are another critical concern. War-related disruptions severely impact schooling for millions of children across conflict-affected regions. Employment challenges also loom large, with economic downturns severely limiting opportunities for youth. This compounds the broader socio-economic challenges that emerge from conflict. The report finds many instances of damage or destruction of infrastructure, including youth facilities, which further impacts services available to young people.

The report sheds light on the 'brain drain' and youth migration which changes the composition of the workforce and amplifies challenges faced by young Ukrainians. A rising demand for foreign language skills is an unexpected consequence of the conflict, as well as an elevated interest in language learning. Young people have adapted their behaviour as a result of these challenges and have mobilised to support their communities amidst the crisis. Despite restrictions on global partnerships and international cooperation as a result of the war, local and grassroots initiatives are thriving.

Indeed, despite multi-layered and complex challenges, the report emphasises the resilience of Ukrainian youth. The countless grassroots initiatives and community-driven efforts offer hope for recovery and future collaboration in rebuilding a brighter future

for Ukraine. By focusing on the current impact of the war, the report also points out an important literature gap, namely the hopes and aspirations of Ukrainian youth and their plans for the future. The report also fails to duly consider the practical implications of the war on young people's everyday lives.

3.2. Lessons from youth studies in other conflict areas

This subsection provides takeaways from studies of public opinion among youth during or after conflicts in Israel/Palestine, Georgia, and Northern Ireland. This sample of studies is based on their potential relevance for the design of the current research project. The circumstances of these conflicts do not bear close resemblance to the Russia-Ukraine war, nor does this subsection aim to provide a comprehensive exploration of youths' moods in these societies. Nonetheless, these studies are valuable as examples of different methods and forms for public opinion analysis amongst youth in the context of conflict and post-conflict recovery. They are significant mainly to explore possible methodological approaches and for shaping the research questions.



3.2.1. *Israel/Palestine*

Intractable conflict and lack of perspective shape youth moods and sentiments in Israel and Palestine. One study of Israeli and Palestinian youth highlights the role of the feasibility factor when it comes to public support towards specific options for conflict resolution. This explains the declining support for the oft-cited two-state solution; an extremely low proportion of youth, both on the Israeli and the Palestinian sides, consider this option feasible and implementable¹⁰. The resulting hypothesis is that support for de-escalation or deconfliction mechanisms are directly related to the likelihood, feasibility, or believability of the proposed measures.

This case also shows that there may be a difference in attitudes not only between opposing communities but also within these communities¹¹. Within the Palestinian and Israeli populations, specific groups tend to respond differently to proposed peace plans. For instance, among the Palestinian population, there is significant differentiation by region, political affiliation, and level of religious observance¹². Age is also a factor in public opinion. The youngest polled Palestinians (18–22 y.o.) demonstrate greater acceptance of (40%) peace plans than their older compatriots¹³. Among the Israelis, age-determined differences in public opinion are also significant alongside other factors, like ideological preferences, religiosity, place of residence, or ethnicity. For example, while 43% of Jewish respondents above 65 years old support the detailed peace package, only 20% of young Jewish Israelis (18–24 y.o.) feel the same¹⁴. Studies of public opinion from both conflict parties reveal the following takeaways relevant to this study:

- Longer lasting conflicts, even if there is

little escalation (the mentioned Israel/Palestine Study was completed in December 2022), can lead to stronger feelings of distrust and lack of confidence in conflict resolution;

- Age is an important factor for shaping opinion on conflict-resolution mechanisms, but it must be treated in context with other socio-demographic factors;
- Protracted conflict and failed attempts at resolution may lead to the perception of the conflict as a zero-sum game.

3.2.2. *Georgia*

The two Georgia youth studies analysed – “Youth Values and Political Activism in Georgia”¹⁵ (2021) by the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies and “Youth Study Generation of Independent Georgia: in between hopes and uncertainties”¹⁶ (2023) by Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) – did not yield relevant conclusions beyond confirming the general trends for countries experiencing Russian aggression and/or occupation:

- Lack of exposure to Russian cultural influences leads to less favourable opinions about Russia;
- Protracted, frozen conflict leads to a decrease in exposure, interest, and mutual understanding between countries;
- As an occupying force, Russia is viewed largely negatively and is seen as an obstacle to the development of the country;
- Russia is seen as the largest single external threat to the country.

3.2.3. *Northern Ireland*

Lessons drawn from the Northern Ireland case are based on the report “Young people

10 https://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/Summary%20Report_%20English_Joint%20Poll%202024%20Jan%202023.pdf “Palestinian-Israeli Pulse: A Joint Poll, conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) in Ramallah and the International Program in Conflict Resolution and Mediation at Tel Aviv University with funding from the Netherlands Representative Office in Ramallah and the Representative Office of Japan to Palestine through UNDP/PAPP. The joint poll was conducted during December 2022. – p.5.

11 https://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/Summary%20Report_%20English_Joint%20Poll%202024%20Jan%202023.pdf “Palestinian-Israeli Pulse: A Joint Poll – p. 14.

12 Ibid. – p.20

13 Ibid. – p.21

14 Ibid. – p. 21.

15 “Youth Values and Political Activism in Georgia”, conducted by Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GSIS)

16 “Youth Study Generation of Independent Georgia: in between hopes and uncertainties”, conducted by Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES)

of the peace process: exploring the social, political, and cultural issues that matter.”¹⁷

The study was commissioned and conducted by the Northern Ireland Youth Forum and ran from October 2020 to April 2021.

The study brings to light the following important trends:

- Long-lasting conflict shapes collective memory, and awareness of the conflict remains high even in younger generations not directly involved in the conflict.
- Young people learn about conflicts like the Troubles primarily from social relationships like family (82%) or school and university connections (71%).
- Socio-economic concerns (employment, personal finances, appropriate housing) and mental health remain the top concerns for youth long after the resolution of the conflict. The nature and cause of these concerns might differ from the active conflict stage, but these challenges can drive the public mood in the decades after the conflict ends.
- Political resolution of the conflict does not necessarily lead to a feeling of certainty about the future for young people. In the Northern Irish Case, 87% of the youth population (16–22 y.o) remained concerned about their future over 20 years after the Good Friday Agreement. Indeed, concern about their future is the number one concern for young people.

3.3. Takeaways from the literature review

Using the analysis of existing studies on the impact of the war on youth in Ukraine and insights from the research conducted in other conflict or post-war contexts, we determined the following **lessons learned**, which guided the design of this research:

- We lack a full-fledged and coherent picture of the needs, concerns, and practical problems faced by the youth in Ukraine that are dynamic and changeable. More research is needed to put these concerns into the broader context.

This study must look deeper into how young people's lives are affected by war in practice, what needs and concerns they prioritise, and how this impacts the quality of their lives. Qualitative methods will allow us to augment previous findings.

In-depth research should focus on how experiencing war shapes everyday life and impacts feelings about the future.

First and foremost, we are interested in the extent to which people feel optimism, pessimism, frustration, hope or any other way about their personal future and the future of Ukraine. We want to gauge how and when social frustration arises as the war continues, especially in light of previous optimistic predictions about the Ukrainian victory that have thus far not been met.

- Further study is needed on the factors and underlying motivations driving either the desire to emigrate or to stay within Ukraine.

Motivations may vary over time and depend on the progress of the war. Thus, a qualitative analysis of the factors influencing migration plans is crucial for the development of further targeted youth projects in Ukraine. This is also important for understanding future recovery in Ukraine.

- We need to investigate how and when young people participate actively in civic and political life in Ukraine is an additional track of research, as such participation can influence the decision to emigrate.

This is a valuable contribution to assessing human capital in Ukraine. This research may inform future policy efforts to encourage youth to stay in Ukraine.

- It is important to understand the capacity of Ukrainian youth to plan their lives in the short- to long-term future.

The impact of war is long-lasting and can present new challenges long after the active phase of conflict is over. It is therefore important to understand how young people are thinking about these important issues.



4 Findings

4.1 Impact of the war on peoples' lives: overall impression and emotions

Most respondents share the same general impression that their life after the large-scale invasion fundamentally changed. All respondents were asked to evaluate the impact of the war on their life on a scale from 0–10, where “0” means the war does not impact their life and “10” means the strongest possible impact. **More than half of respondents** of the FGDs and in-depth interviews **define the impact of the war as extremely negative** and determinative (scores “8” to “10”, most of them – “10”). No one scored the impact of the war as low (“0” to “3” on the scale).

Opinions on the impact of the war are shaped by their proximity to intense fighting and to airstrikes. For instance, respondents in the major city in eastern macro-region, which is constantly shelled, predominantly think that the war fully determines their lives (10 out of 10), while people residing in the west of the country tend to rate this impact as moderate (Between 4 to 7 out of 10).

Still, even those who rate the impact of the war somewhere in the middle spectrum of the scale may have done so in relative terms, understanding that the current state of the conflict does not necessarily reflect the worst possible outcome.¹⁸



I think it's not the maximum, because it could be worse. Actually, there are problems with work: my wife has no job because of the war, but this is not the maximum impact yet. It could be worse. At the moment, we are still holding on somehow.

Male, 20–35, centre, small towns or rural areas

Nonetheless, even those respondents living in relatively calm areas where the missile attacks are not as frequent as in other parts of the country tend to rate the impact of the war close to the maximum possible.

For some participants, the changes in their lives are more on a practical level, especially for IDPs and other vulnerable groups (LGBTQ, disabled persons, Roma people, military). For others, the impact is rather emotional because of stressful living conditions and new social circumstances.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) tended to evaluate repercussions of the war more strongly than other members of the community. Namely, their evaluations tend to a peak value of the scale (10 out of 10). They explain this by some additional challenges they have in comparison with other respondents. Among these challenges and factors, IDPs mentioned:

- undesired or forced relocation;
- problems with employment, including lack of jobs;
- children's education;
- poor living conditions at the new place of

¹⁸ Respondents were asked to rate the impact of the large-scaled war on their life on the scale from 0 to 10, where zero is “the war does not affect me and my current life at all”, and ten means “everything in my life is under the influence of the war and is determined by it”.

residence, including lack of furniture;

- lack of financial resources;
- lost connections with relatives.

The most pessimistic scores given are from IDPs who have no proper accommodation and/or employment in their new residence:



My score is 10. In the village where I live now there is no work, there is nothing – as they say, we're merely surviving.

Female, 20–35, centre, small towns or rural areas

The most pessimistic responses in such cases are explained by a) dissatisfaction with current living situations, and b) a lack of opportunities and perspectives to improve the status-quo. Many IDPs are staying in accommodation provided to them for free or at a reduced rental rate, which makes them feel on the one hand beholden, and on the other afraid to lose this accommodation. Some are afraid of losing free accommodation even if they do not have jobs in the same community. Others are concerned of possible job loss or increase in rental prices when they rent the apartment and pay for it. In any case, uncertainty, poor living conditions, and fear of a worsening situation lead to strongly negative evaluation of the war's impact on their lives.

Qualitatively, the overall effect of the war is assessed mainly through the criteria of employment, income, availability of permanent accommodation, and (un) predictability of the overall situation.

In most cases, Ukrainian youth emphasise **deterioration in the quality of their lives or their families' lives** on the one hand, and persistent **unpredictability**, on the other. For this reason, participants rarely respond 'low' or even 'medium' to questions about the impact of the war.



I think it's 9 on the scale.

It affects everything fundamentally – the work, the atmosphere. Let's say it this way: today everything is calm, quiet, but tomorrow everything can change radically.

Male, 20–35, centre, small towns or rural areas



“

In my case, I'll choose 9–9.5, and, if I have the option, then even 10.

For example, let's take such areas of life as work, personal life, health, socialisation as well: everything has changed. I work in the beauty industry. That is, I work with women who come to a beauty salon. In the first months of the war, [my work] was irrelevant. So it's all connected: no work, no money, no opportunity. It's simple.

LGBTQ respondent, male, east (age was not disclosed by the respondent):



While older young people (20–35 y.o.) tend to focus on security and economic components of the war's impact (employment, level of welfare, intensity of the strikes on cities), some of the most tangible consequences of the war cited by students are remote studying and the breakdown of their normal in-person communication with friends.

There are clear regional differences in perceptions of the effect of the war on daily life between 2014 and 2022. Most notably, residents of central and western macro-regions tend to report the impact of the war on their lives starting from the large-scale invasion in 2022. They do not feel these repercussions after the initial conflict began in 2014.

Discussions with respondents in the eastern macro-region, meanwhile, revealed that people felt the impact of the war in Donbas starting in 2014. Practically, they witnessed demographic changes, such as the movement of first waves of IDPs from Donbas, and witnessed the first examples of people suffering from post-traumatic syndromes. Some participants saw the signs for the large-scale war already in Donbas in 2014. The youngest respondents are less likely to remember any significant changes in their lives in the immediate aftermath of 2014. In most cases, the reason is simply a lack of mature and conscious memories about the war, which started ten years ago.

Areas of daily life for youth most affected by the war are as follows:

- **Psychological and emotional challenges**
Extreme emotional pressure, elevated anxiety, and constant, unyielding stress are feelings shared across all age groups.
- **Socio-economic problems (loss of jobs, problems with employment, decrease in incomes)**
Job losses after the 2022 invasion prove to be a widespread problem,

which is experienced frequently either by respondents themselves or by family members or close friends. This sentiment is echoed in both age groups. The younger participants (ages 14–19 y.o.) witness their families' changing financial situation even when they are not yet earning themselves. Almost every family seems to be impacted by decreasing income, welfare, and problems with employment.

- **Plans for the future.**

Impossibility of planning anything due to unpredictability.

- **Breakdown of pre-war social connections and change of social environment (deaths, conscription to the army, people fleeing abroad, ideological disputes etc).**

In addition to this, the youngest group distinguishes several more areas of their life, affected by the war (14–19 y.o.):

- **Studying process: interruption, remote education, absent teachers due to conscription and emigration**

Respondents underline the deterioration in the quality of education starting from the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, but emphasise that the large-scale invasion has significantly worsened the situation. Frequent missile alerts, for example, make any normal studying impossible.

- **Psychological care at educational entities**

Young people express despair about being forced to change schools, missing old friends, and not feeling as comfortable in new social communities.

- **Tiredness and physical exhaustion**

Youth participants report lack of a normal sleep schedule because of regular missile alerts.

The youngest focus group participants are more likely than their older peers to confirm that the war has impacted their way of thinking and social, political, and cultural views. This difference is most evident when it comes to Russian cultural exports, like books and music. Respondents

aged 20 to 35 years old do not report significant change to their mindset on this, while some of the younger participants were fully rejecting Russian culture. This correlates directly with an increase in patriotic moods amongst the youth.

These age-specific differences can be explained by the following factors. First, young people in this age bracket (14–19 y.o.) are at the stage in life during which their mindset, values, and world views are formed and shaped. They therefore tend to be more open to change and more likely to react emotionally to ongoing developments. Whilst participants in the older age bracket are likely more resilient, their experiences in this vein should not be discounted. Nonetheless, those in the younger age bracket are less impacted by other significant life challenges, like employment, raising and educating children, or financial responsibility, and are thus more focused on how the war has shaped less tangible factors like attitudes and perceptions.



4.2. Needs, concerns, and practical problems: wartime experience

In order to find out how youth rank their needs and concerns, and in what way they prioritise them, we asked respondents to distinguish the three most important unfulfilled needs and their top three concerns. This enabled us to structure the most frequently mentioned needs and concerns, which we have collated in the following subsections.

4.2.1. Main needs

The main needs shared by the young population across the country can be grouped in the following way:

- **Security: the psychological feeling of safety and an end to the war**
Security and the end of the war are considered a precondition for the fulfilment of all other needs listed below, especially socio-economic needs.
- **Economic: employment, financial resources, and stability**
Both younger and older respondents, as well as representatives from vulnerable groups, cite economic needs. However, respondents view this need through different lenses based on personal context. For example, youth aged 20–35 y.o. refer to this need more often and assess this through their personal experience, while youth aged 14–19 y.o. mention the deterioration of their socio-economic well-being as a result of the employment or financial problems of their parents.
- **Accommodation: reconstruction, housing security in the rental market**
Dissatisfaction in this area is assessed based on the availability of financial aid rather than based on their own personal resources.

Overall, an important finding of this stage of the research is that young people further away from the frontline (FDGs in the west) are more likely to express socio-economic needs rather than hard security concerns.



Yes, everything is fine, as they say. Namely, there are no explosions or bombings here. Yes, it's quiet here, thank God. But how to survive here?! I don't know what I should do to survive here. It is clear I have to work, but there is no place to work here!

Female, IDP, 20–35 y.o., west, small towns or rural areas

Some respondents, especially in provincial settlements in the centre of Ukraine, seem uncomfortable when speaking about their needs or overall life satisfaction. This is important because it could impact the extent to which research can capture the full picture of those in serious need. The qualitative design of this study allows us to be sensitive to these moments of discomfort and ask more targeted questions while also ensuring proper care for our participants. Quantitative studies, including those in the literature review, may be unable to capture the minutiae of this situation as participants may be tempted to adjust their responses.

Young people especially may feel constrained or embarrassed to speak openly about basic needs, especially those not being met in everyday life. This is evidenced by the way in which young people respond to questions by hedging and qualifying their answers rather than speaking plainly about the difficulty of ensuring adequate food, housing, or other basic needs. The main reason for this shortfall is a lack of financial capacity.

4.2.2. Regional differences in needs

Although security needs and welfare-related needs are most frequently named by respondents across the country, the correlation between these two needs vary from one region to another. In particular, proximity to the frontline and intensity of Russian attacks are predictors of stronger security and safety needs. Psychological safety and stability occupies one of the leading places among security-related issues.

Meanwhile, in regions further away from the active war zone, people tend to be more concerned with welfare and tend to measure the quality of their life through socio-economic lenses, rather than mainly security.

In particular, while answering what are their three main needs, youth in the west of the country **frequently** mention **housing, health, jobs, and prices**.

4.2.3. Age-specific differences in needs

The youngest group of the respondents demonstrate a strong need for **education**, and a lack of fulfilment in **socialisation and communication**. The latter unites youth both from rural/provincial areas of eastern macroregion and major cities in the west of Ukraine.



All my basic needs are met in general. What I may be dissatisfied with is lack of socialising and studies. Since my studies have been transferred to an online format, my group mates and I have fewer activities, so I socialise with other people very little. I think if I were transferred to offline studies, and I could socialise more, these two needs would be met immediately.

Male, 14–19, west, major city



I need society to communicate with. This is my main problem. I would also like to study at school live, not online. Because of this, my social life has deteriorated.

Female, 14–19, east, small towns or rural areas



Studying online does not seem to be emotionally tenable for them anymore. The overall impression about the quality of life is deteriorating to a great extent because of social isolation.

Teenagers are not only witnessing financial problems in their families, but are also actively thinking about how to help their parents financially. Many of them are thinking about working alongside their studies to contribute to families' budgets.

This signals to us the significant deterioration of welfare in families and the lack of parents' abilities to provide adequate care. As this becomes visible to teenagers, they are motivated to help out more, which increases the emotional pressure on young people.

In some cases, this might lead to an **underestimation of their own problems**, namely with the quality of their own lives. This is prevalent when they assess their needs in comparison with efforts made by parents or relatives. In particular, if parents are working hard to provide for the family, the teenagers might assess their life conditions as satisfactory, even if a number of their basic needs are not fulfilled.



What are your main needs at the moment?

Moderator

I need to move around the apartment somehow. But it's not adapted for wheelchairs and others. Well, I have one wheelchair. The day before yesterday, my dad bought me a chair for the bath, but it didn't fit (the bathroom). So, I guess I need something else. And I need it now. I need a handrail. But we are living here now, I could say, temporarily. We'll probably move to another city soon]. I am kind of... Well, I don't really have any real needs.

Male, disabled, east, major city



The latent risks related to these findings is that while observing deterioration in their family welfare, teenagers feel either obliged to help the parents or feel helpless and guilty for not being able to contribute. In any case, there is a risk of increasing frustration on an emotional level and changing priorities between studying and working on a practical level. For the stakeholders and policymakers, it should serve as a signal that young people can focus on earning money rather than on studying. This tendency should be followed and further verified, especially in case of further deepening of the economic crisis and rising cost of living in Ukraine.

4.2.4. Specific needs of IDPs

IDPs tend to demonstrate a stronger focus on mainly unfulfilled needs in **employment, financial stability and accommodation**. People feel they can hardly provide for themselves or their children. Lack of proper conditions at their accommodation (for instance, furniture); insufficient clothes in needed quantities or sizes (namely, for children growing fast); and money and job prospects even made some IDPs think about returning to home on the occupied territories. Cost of living, especially for internally displaced women with small children, was mentioned as the reason to think about this scenario. Some female IDPs with children mention that they cannot earn their living in their new place, but have to pay all the bills and rent.

Consequently, **unfulfilled socio-economic needs and lack of perspectives to satisfy them make people doubt the absolute priority of security**. However, it does not mean that security is considered separately from the socio-economic needs. On the contrary, it rather means that security is understood by youth to be broader. Rather than just a lack of violence in their residence, young people consider security in terms of stable housing and other socio-economic opportunities to earn their living. This, in turn, can at least partially explain the logic of

people residing in actively shelled areas with no readiness to relocate, especially if they have stable housing and jobs.

4.2.5. Main concerns

The following concerns are based on the participants' prioritisation and are deeply interconnected with the abovementioned needs:

- **Security and health** of relatives and close contacts
 - Constant air alerts
 - Destruction of the whole cities, civilian casualties
- **Unpredictability and lack of confidence in the near future**
 - Shared by both groups of the youth in different regions



Probably, first of all, is the health and safety of relatives, and some confidence in tomorrow to have at least some hope.

Male, 20–35, centre, small towns or rural areas

Possibility of the breakthrough by Russian forces and occupation of new territories

- **Lack of bomb shelters**
- **Corruption**

Respondents in western Ukraine (both men and women) are highly concerned with the ongoing conscription.¹⁹ However, conscription was not widely raised and discussed by the respondents in other focus groups, nor did moderators directly address this issue. Lack of specific feedback on conscription-related issues can be explained by a number of factors. First, the field work

¹⁹ Reminder: field work was taking place in late January–February 2024.

took place in late January – February 2024 when the new amendments to the legislation on conscription were not yet approved and public discussion had only just started. Secondly, some respondents may have felt uncomfortable or emotionally unsafe speaking against the conscription publicly, even in an online format with strangers. At that time, respondents may have felt judged for expressing views critical of conscription. Last but not least, at the time of the field work, the lower age limit for conscription was 27, thus only impacting a minority of FGD participants.

There is a feeling that until the war is going on concerns about security, health and predictability of the nearest future will not disappear. Remarkably, the majority of the respondents see the only guarantee for future security not only in an end to the war, but in a Ukrainian victory. Victory of Ukraine in the war dominates the list of possible options for how to provide people with security.



It will help if the war finally ends. But we need it to be over, not frozen or something else. And for the city to be restored. There should be projects to rebuild it, not just promises “we will rebuild it,” and it’s not happening.

Female, 20–35, east, major cities

Uncertainty and unpredictability regarding the future and a framework for the end of the war fuels anxiety and frustration, especially in frontline cities.

Indeed, any kind of improvement in terms of well-being is connected with the victory of Ukraine in the war. At the same time, young people see no clear perspective for when the war will end. This means that a Ukrainian victory is both a precondition for improvement of participants' lives, but is also an uncertain outcome. This paradox negatively impacts people's emotional and psychological state, leaving them in a constant state of stress and anxiety.





I agree. There is uncertainty about what will happen next. For the boys, for friends, those who are fighting. Those who are no longer there. You are also worried all the time, monitoring all the time: if they are in or out of contact. If they don't get in touch for two or three days, you worry about them too.

Male, 20–35, east, major cities

4.2.6. Age-specific differences

Education-related concerns are more often expressed by the youngest groups of the respondents across all targeted regions. The majority of young people in this age-specific group study tend to prioritise concerns regarding this part of their life. This is logically explained by personal experience of studying and the significance of education for future life. These concerns include disadvantages and problems caused by the war like constant air alerts and remote studying process. They also include concerns about the qualifications and level of engagement and motivation of the teaching staff. Moreover, teenagers graduating from the school this year often mention the serious emotional tension and even physiological exhaustion they feel. Without normal sleep and while in constant stress, they are concerned about failing their final exams and having their efforts be wasted.

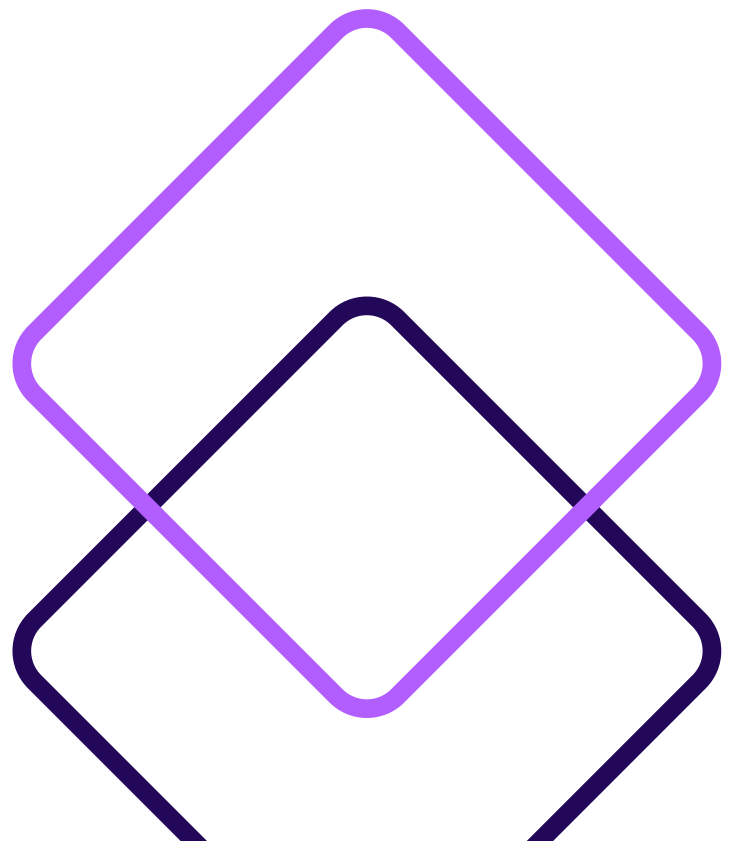
Other sources of concern among the youngest respondents:

- The country's development direction
- Some respondents were concerned about politicians and others in power not caring about Ukraine.
- Freedom and liberties.
- Freedom of speech.
- Loss of lives, both soldiers, and civilians.
- Negative attitude towards soldiers.
- Healthcare quality, cost, and lack of access

Some respondents in the youngest group feel the moral pressure and frustration because of a lack of control over their lives.

They are concerned about their closest relatives and sometimes feel confused or even guilty because they lack the capacity to protect their families.

At the same time, the youngest group of the respondents appear to have clear answers to **how to tackle problems and sources of their concern**. In particular, when it comes to the quality of education they strongly argue for 1) **a return to an in-person education**, 2) **psychological training** aimed at helping youth to keep emotional stability and decreasing the level of stress in their life. These sessions might be conducted at schools.



4.2.7. Practical problems people are facing in the light of the war

Internally displaced young people often face the problem of insufficient funds, improper accommodation conditions, and sometimes lack of water, clothes, or wood for heating. This directly impacts their emotional state. Youth in frontline communities express problems with access to medical treatments, as hospitals in frontline cities are overloaded with soldiers being treated.

Speaking generally about practical problems faced by the youth in different parts of the country, it is worth mentioning that lack of jobs leads to lack of financial capacities to fulfil needs (transportation, accommodation etc). This becomes even more visible because of social and financial division between wealthy and poor groups within the society.



As I say: 'I don't want money, I want – give me a job, and I will earn.' There is no need to give me money – give me a job. But unfortunately, there are problems with this.

Female, IDP, 20–35, centre, small towns or rural areas

Youth aged 20–35 y.o. do not feel any difference between themselves and other young people or the rest of the population. However, some of them recall that the issue of conscription to the army might seem more visible and significant for the youth than for the others. The youngest group, teenagers, tend to say that life in Ukraine is easier for young people than for older people, because teenagers do not have to solve any practical issues and problems. Some of the male respondents in the west of the country are very much focused on conscription

perspectives, which impacts their opinion about the freedom of movement around the city. Some men seem to be frightened and reluctant to be drafted.

While assessing their own lives, the youngest respondents tend to feel they have grown up prematurely. However, they are unable to elaborate on what this means other than readiness to help their parents as if they were already fully grown adults.



I think the youth are more mature now. Under certain circumstances, the children have to grow up earlier. They are lacking childhood with this war, because everyone needs you to be an adult too, to understand everything, and not just play around and go out.

Female, 14–19, centre, major cities

Practical problems on the side of the youngest part of the target audience:

- **Widely expressed:** lack of school supplies and equipment
- Lack of shelter
- Lack of financial means and basic needs (IDPs) for living and need in social payments/support and even food (IDPs). Basic household needs are considered by IDP teenagers as unsatisfactory as they often have to share accommodation.
- Limited access to healthcare, especially hospitalisation options due to prioritisation of military casualties and overcrowding at hospitals

4.2.8. Impact of the war on social connections

The majority of the respondents point out that their social connections have changed after the large-scale war. Some of the respondents say that they have stopped communicating with former relatives or friends because of ideological differences, in particular if those acquaintances or friends have pro-Russian opinions. Their circles of communication became tighter and include those with the same perceptions and opinions.

Sometimes communications are based on proximity rather than preference. Although online communication is still present and important, it cannot replace the previous offline meetings and discussions. Over long distances, people feel they are losing their connection with those who were previously considered significant others. Additionally, the change of physical social environment and lack of friends nearby likely impacts the quality of the study process for students.

However, the change of social environment does not necessarily have a negative impact on people's current life. Some young people see this as a kind of a natural filtration of social connections. Only those who truly care about them still stay in their life regardless of distance.

The younger the respondent, the more likely they tend to be dedicated to Ukrainian culture and oriented away from Russian cultural products to Ukrainians ones. However, there is no data in these findings on the specific formats of Ukrainian cultural products which are preferred, or on the tendency to look for additional foreign, for instance, English-language products. This refusal

from Russian products can lead to conflict with friends and relatives because of a consolidation of a Ukraine-centric mindset and lack of tolerance among youth towards pro-Russian views.



So, I have stopped socialising with a lot of people, because they support Russian culture and the actions of Russia.

Female, 14–19, centre, major cities

Abandoning Russian products is explained by **increasing levels of patriotism among Ukrainian youth**. Thus, in 2022, support for patriotism as a factor consolidating Ukrainian society was the highest among youth in comparison to other age groups (41% among youth of 18–29 y.o. according to a DIF survey).²⁰ Current qualitative research proves that **patriotic feelings at this moment are associated with decreasing, absent, or low tolerance to Russian cultural products**. Cutting off ties with pro-Russian people in their circles is a consequence of this rising patriotism. The second explanation for abandoning Russian culture is that **it is viewed more broadly** than just regarding specific cultural products. In particular, young people demonstrate the strongest rejection of Russian literature in Ukrainian schools among all age groups (46% among respondents of 18–29 y.o.).²¹ Moreover, for more than half of Ukrainian youth there are no justified cases for using

²⁰ Nationwide public opinion poll "Independence Day of Ukraine: what unites and Ukrainians and how we see the victory" was conducted by Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation jointly with Razumkov Centre on 5–12th of August, 2022.

²¹ Nationwide public opinion poll "National culture and language in Ukraine: changes over one year into the large scale war" was conducted by Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation jointly with Razumkov Centre on 13–21th of December, 2022.

Russian language by Ukrainian artists.²²

Therefore, we conclude that Russian culture is perceived as a domain of warfare against Ukraine, together with the military, political, and other instruments. Thus, stronger resistance to Russian culture, observed in this research among the youngest groups (14–19 y.o) is logically combined with more frequently mentioned patriotism, national identity and dedication to Ukraine's future as justification to stay and build their life in Ukraine.

4.3. The impact of the war on state services

This study also considered the availability and quality of state services impacted by the war. There were separate discussions about **education, healthcare, and administrative services** (ordering various official documents (international passports, ID cards, driving licences etc.), and any other cases of addressing executive administrations), with a focus on access to these services, quality, and difference in both availability and quality in comparison to the times before the full-fledged aggression.

On **education**, both in terms of availability and quality, after the outbreak of the large-scale war respondents indicate that they have become used to remote study and for some of them it may be more familiar than in-person learning. After a full interruption of the studying process from February to April 2022, universities have reopened, but primarily online, like during the COVID-19 pandemic.



I wouldn't say that it's harder, because we were already familiar with online education before the war, during the lockdown. So there is nothing new for us. I think it will be a novelty for us to go to classes all the time without using online learning.

Female, 20–35, east, major cities



According to the respondents, availability and safety of offline studying is highly likely to be one of the crucial factors for families when deciding whether to return to cities like Kharkiv. Those who stay in the intensively shelled eastern macroregion refer to the experience of their friends who can better and more predictably organise their life in western regions of Ukraine.



... I have a friend who went to the western regions. ...He said: 'It's very convenient for us. We won't come back until offline schools open in Kharkiv.' We asked: 'Is that the only condition?' They said: 'Actually, no, but it's one of the main ones. Peace of mind and the fact that my child can attend activities. Although our child also attends activities, it is still with a feeling of anxiety.'

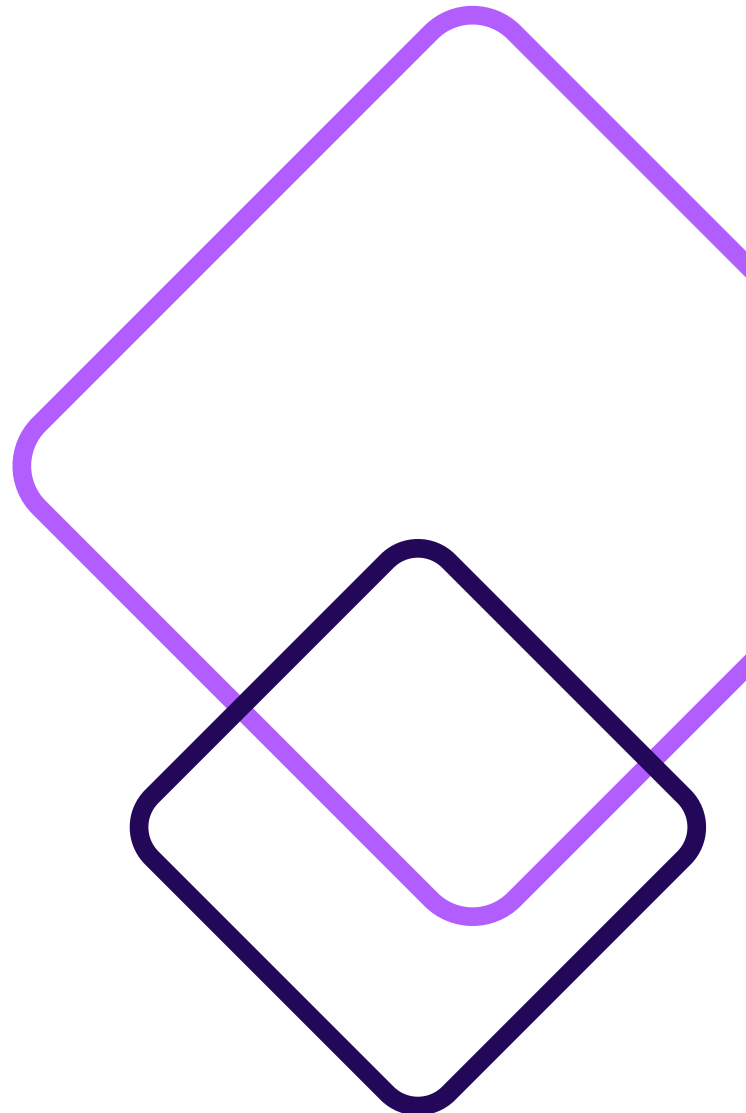
Male, 20–35, east, major cities

Respondents in western Ukraine who have children are in most cases satisfied that children are going to schools in person and have time for extra classes after the school. Young parents complain mainly about the curriculum in schools while speaking about the situation with education.

Teenagers studying offline in western Ukraine widely share an opinion about the decrease in the quality of education and the decrease of their own capacities to process the information. Physical exhaustion caused by constant air alerts during nights makes even offline studying difficult and limits their ability to learn.

While thinking about the possible solutions and responses to these education-related problems and challenges, young respondents mention possible recording of the lessons and additional explanations of the topics, construction of shelters to continue studying regardless of air sirens and necessary psychological support to teenagers.

Regarding the situation with **healthcare**, findings of this study demonstrate that, despite some regional differences, on average healthcare, at least primary care, remains accessible all across the country. However, problems with access are more frequent for residents of rural areas and representatives of vulnerable groups, namely IDPs and disabled people. First, because of complicated and too expensive logistics of getting to the clinics in major cities, and secondly because of lack of money to pay for extra medical services or private doctors if needed.





I say: 'You must, you are such a hospital that, well, you must at least make fillings for the child free of charge. Moreover, we are IDPs, at least somehow, at least a little!' I say: 'I can't pay because I don't have money!' Just... well...

Female, IDP, 20–35, west, small towns or rural areas

Youth with better financial opportunities often go to private services in cases of unsatisfactory experience in quality with public hospitals.

Speaking about the impact of the war on **administrative services**, respondents in provincial areas of the western macro-region underline longer waiting times at the local Centres for Administrative Services (TSNAP23). They see the difference in comparison to pre-war, both in terms of function and quality. In particular, they remember administrative services being provided much faster and communication with staff being more pleasant and ethical. **Long queues are the main problem. This is directly explained by the significantly increased population in western cities after February 2022.** However, generally speaking, there are no significant changes noticed by youth in administrative services provided to them, except for specific cases with IDPs.

Though there were separate discussions about **education, healthcare and administrative services, respondents** were more eager to speak about the situation with healthcare and described this more extensively. The slightly weaker focus on

education, in particular, may be explained by the fact that education-related needs and concerns were touched upon and detailed throughout other parts of the discussion, especially with current students. Additionally, healthcare appears to be a matter of personal concern either for respondents themselves or for members of their families, and directly intersects with other components of respondents' lives, for instance financial capacities to cover medical costs.

4.4. Young people's plans, aspirations, perspectives, and feelings

Most of the respondents do not have any strategic plans. Their general life planning horizon is one month out, for which they generally only consider household chores and meetings. Some young people plan no longer than one week in advance.



But I don't have any global plans. Because it's scary to plan. I don't plan to build a house or have children.

Female, 20–35, east, major cities

They live from one day to the next and emphasise how their plans are dependent on the war, its duration, and the circumstances under which the war will end. Thus, even in western Ukraine, young people above 20 years of age are unsure whether they will need to flee somewhere in case of escalation.

“

I have no plans. You can't make plans if you don't know whether you'll stay here tomorrow or whether they'll take you somewhere. What can be planned here?

Male, 20–35, west, major cities

4.4.1. The gap between current plans and the desired future without war

While hypothesising about the plans for life if the war ended, respondents tend to think they would work and live more proactively and fully. They underline that they did not appreciate life fully during peaceful times. However, some of them doubt that the end of the war will simply make life easier, in particular from a socio-economic point-of-view, as they fear further deterioration of well-being and increase of poverty.



“

It will probably be a little easier (after the war – ed.). They won't be shelling us. But for some reason, I have this fear that difficult times without salaries being paid may come. Now we and our country are receiving financial support...I hope support will continue. I'm afraid that it will be even harder when the war is over. To be without a salary... For some reason, there is a fear that everything will not be so bright, like the war is over and we will all live happily ever after.

Male, 20–35, east, major cities

In regions where the security situation is somewhat better, people are more likely to formulate a desired scenario of what they would do in case the war ended in the near future. Mainly, they mention starting some small businesses, building or reconstructing their houses, or making some purchases they are holding off on.

Teenagers who are still at school tend to plan their life depending on phases of the education process (final exams at the school, entering the university or a couple of years before graduation from the school etc).

However, the potential end of the war right now does not seem to change the plans of the youngest group of respondents. The adjustments to their plans in case the war is over would refer mainly to having vacations abroad with their families, but will not influence their decision to study at Ukrainian universities.

“

My plans will stay as they are, I don't want to leave, I want to be in Ukraine.

Female, 14–19, west, major cities

This finding about the youngest respondents' dedication to build their life in Ukraine leads to two conclusions.

On the one hand, it influences the potential sustainability of youth-related projects, activities, and policies in Ukraine. In particular, these aspirations to stay and live in Ukraine pave the way for national and international stakeholders to work with this audience long-term. On the other hand, any expressed intention to stay in Ukraine now may change in future, which means all youth-related policies should be flexible and adjustable to new circumstances.

4.4.2. Feelings and expectations regarding the future

Respondents in the eastern major cities experienced difficulties in expressing or formulating the feelings they have while thinking about their future. The lack of plans seems to lead to emotional emptiness and frustration.

Respondents express some fears that even if the shelling and warfare stops, those who fled the war will not return home. This is a demotivating factor for planning future business or similar activities.

Fear is a complex feeling that is widely shared by people, including those a long distance from the active war zone. This includes fear of being killed, of occupation, or of being a victim of a war crime committed by Russian soldiers.

Frustration and uncertainty are also widely shared. At the same time, people tend to focus on the positive.

“

Well, at least not to give up, and work. Something should operate at least in the west and there should be a financial opportunity...

Male, 20–35, west, small towns or rural areas

“

The feeling of obscurity of what may happen. After all, life is unpredictable. There is no stability. You can hope for the better.

Male, 14–19 y.o, west, major cities

In the focus group in the major cities in eastern Ukraine, there was a clear difference between the first part of the discussion, when people actively and exhaustively explained their needs, problems, circumstances of their life, and the second part, when they were asked to speak about their plans, feelings, and emotions. There are possible explanations for this: one could be emotional resistance and (un)conscious blocks created by respondents for themselves when it comes to the future. After talking about very visible and tangible problems and needs, the emotional side of their life and their personal aspirations might seem less important for respondents. The second explanation for this outcome may be a high level of social frustration and real lack of plans. The exact proportion between these two explanatory components cannot be assumed or measured in this research, but should be a subject for deeper dive in the next rounds of qualitative studies.

4.5. Future of Ukraine

4.5.1. Perspectives on the war and confidence in Ukrainian victory

People believe in the victory of Ukraine in this war, but strongly connect it with:

- Ukraine's international partners' support and weapons supply;
- Domestic reforms, public administration on the side of the government, and fighting corruption;
- Consolidation of Ukrainian society like during the first year of the war.

They point out that full dependence on foreign assistance must be overcome to make Ukraine more independent and acknowledge the role of the society in developing the capacity to win.



I always say that people are doing a lot now. The government needs to eliminate corruption because there's a rage that's coming up. But a lot also depends on people.

Female, 20–35, east, major cities

While thinking about the future of Ukraine, respondents distinguish between the state on the one hand, and society on the other hand. In particular, while speaking about the state, they are not optimistic about solving public policy problems. When it comes to society, respondents are hopeful for an opportunity for Ukraine in general to move forward, especially thanks to the grassroots level activities and resources.



But looking at the people, and looking at their faith and the way people have proven themselves over these two years, I still have hope. Here I see something good. But unfortunately not in terms of statehood.

Male, 20–35, east, major cities

Respondents are aware that the socio-demographic structure of Ukrainian society is changing and, after the war, society and local communities will look completely different from pre-war times. Parents who have children underline they are going to prepare themselves and their children to live in a society with a large number of people suffering different types of trauma syndromes, depressions and/or disability because of the war.

People believe in reconstruction and emphasise that the whole country should be involved in efforts to rebuild Ukraine.

As for the future of Ukraine, young people expect the war to continue for several more years and end with the victory of Ukraine followed by accession to the European Union and NATO. Internally Displaced People seem to be less confident and more sceptical both about the situation on the frontline and reconstruction of Ukraine (west of Ukraine, provincial areas).

Teenagers in the survey are mostly confident in Ukraine's capacity to win. It will depend both on foreign partners' support, weapons supply, and on domestic policies (mobilisation, fighting corruption). However, they do not expect the war to be over soon.

“

Our country may be at war for the other 2–3 years at best, also if our partners supply the weapons to us as promised, Russia has shown to all the other states that America and Europe, or rather the entire forces are unfit for combat, this is my opinion, of course, that's the way I see it on the political arena. As for Ukraine, we can still win but most likely it will be not by military but rather diplomatic means. We are in great need of people.

Male, 14–19, west, major cities

Teenagers in the east have more concerns about how and when Ukraine can win, and expect a continuation of the war in the near future, but still believe in victory. This will prompt reconstruction, renewal of business, and economic activities. This group demonstrates strong interest and even commitment to participating in reconstruction and **boosting the social and cultural life in their communities.**

“

I'm interested in some youth spaces, training, and some new locations. Corruption and lack of funds can be obstacles ... At first, probably, as a listener, to learn, to see how it is, will I like it or not. And then, if there is such an opportunity, study and only then become an organiser.

Female, 14–19, east, small towns or rural areas

Other teenagers also expressed interest in organising cultural, educational, and enlightenment events. They see this as the way to increase the quality of cultural life in their communities.

Although there is a clear intention among young people to continue living in Ukraine, the risk of Russia's advancement and occupation of new territories may significantly alter these plans. Even the most determined to stay despite the hardships acknowledge that they may be forced to flee if their region is occupied.





I also stay here, because I had the opportunity to leave with a small child. I said: 'I will not leave Ukraine!'

Female, IDP, 20–35, centre, small towns or rural areas:

What would make you change your decision to stay? What could it be?

Moderator

If the Russians come here, that's all – there will be no Ukraine anymore. Then [...] (I'll leave).

Female, IDP, 20–35, centre, small towns or rural areas



IDPs have a specific situation which impacts their plans either to stay in current communities or return to their original place of residence.

IDPs who have no plans for return home mainly explain this because of one or a combination of the following factors:

- there is no place to return to;
- there are no opportunities for youth (education, work) even if they are liberated;
- fear;
- no certainty about reconstruction;
- waning hope for return in the near future;
- frustration and lack of confidence in any sense of permanence because of compounding losses.

Those IDPs who think about returning to their original place of residence are not settled on this decision, and their current situation may eventually change their minds about returning. Accommodation is of paramount importance for this decision-making process for IDPs.

Lack of jobs and incomes at the new place can motivate people to return home after de-occupation if their homes are still in place. In case their apartments are destroyed, young people express readiness to return only if they receive another accommodation option.

4.5.2. The role of young people in Ukraine's future

It is remarkable that 20–35-year-olds living in one of the most intensively shelled macroregions of Ukraine (east) predominantly have no plans to leave the country and move abroad. Reasons vary from family circumstances or lack of readiness to divide the family to emotional connection to their home and desire to live in the home city. Most people who express the emotional connection to Ukraine and to their city cannot name any concrete reason forcing them to move abroad. However, respondents noted that if they made the decision to leave it would be because of the enormous psychological stress and emotional burden

of living in a conflict zone. Those who are determined to stay in Ukraine name only security issues as a potential catalyst for leaving, especially in case of occupation of their region or serious increase of the warfare intensity.

Respondents who are motivated to stay in Ukraine, cited the following reasons:

- Work and opportunities for self-development;
- Belief in the country and patriotism;
- Family and emotional comfort among Ukrainian people;
- Fear of a new and unknown environment abroad.

Teenagers who are planning to leave the country, who were a minority of our study, seem rather determined about their path. This group cited the following reasons for their motivation to stay abroad:

- To earn better money
- Curiosity about life abroad
- Continued unemployment in Ukraine
- Lack of accommodation in Ukraine
- Security risks in Ukraine

Some respondents in the 14–19 age group volunteered in 2022 but are less involved now, focusing more on studying instead. Their thoughts about possible engagement in political or civic activity are generally vague, although some underline that they may become activists if their sense of social justice is violated somehow.

When speaking very practically about their own potential participation in reconstruction activities, around two people in each focus group seem to be keen on this idea and ready to contribute. In most cases, they are actively participating in volunteer activities already, and plan to participate either through NGOs or politics. In one FGD, all respondents wanted to participate in reconstruction.



5 Conclusions and recommendations for the British Council in Arts, Education, and English Programs

The report's findings, outlined in the previous chapter, reveal the profound impact of the war on young Ukrainians. The war has overwhelmingly negative effects, with over half of respondents rating its impact as extremely high, citing significant deterioration in quality of life, severe psychological and emotional challenges, and disruption of social connections and educational processes. Vulnerable groups, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs), face additional hardships like accommodation issues and high living costs. These findings significantly enhance our understanding of the scope and interconnection between needs and concerns, which were lacking in other qualitative studies and quantitative surveys. The data particularly illuminates how specific circumstances, such as being an IDP or having a disability, influence the deterioration of youth life. Additionally, the findings offer an explicit view on the underlying motivations of youth planning their lives in Ukraine, adding depth to existing studies.

The primary needs are security, economic stability, and housing. The psychological need for safety is paramount, encompassing more than just the absence of violence but

also the stability provided by employment and secure housing. Economic needs include employment and financial stability, while housing concerns are particularly acute for IDPs and those with diminished incomes. Young people's major concerns are closely tied to these needs. Security and the health of relatives, unpredictability of the future, and the threat of further Russian occupation are significant worries. Younger respondents are particularly concerned about the war's impact on their education and the broader implications for their future.

Furthermore, a notable cultural shift is occurring, with a strong abandonment of Russian culture and an increase in patriotism and national identity among Ukrainian youth. This is accompanied by a tightening of social circles, often due to ideological conflicts over the war.

Future planning is fraught with uncertainty, with many young people unable to make long-term plans. Their life planning horizon is typically limited to one month, heavily influenced by the war's progression. Despite this, there is a widespread belief in Ukraine's eventual reconstruction and victory, requiring comprehensive support for Ukraine's youth, addressing their immediate



needs while fostering resilience and hope for the future.

A concern that cuts across a range of issues listed above is that of resource scarcity. Particularly younger cohorts of youth (teenagers) are keen on the idea of being active in civic and political life, but often connect this with financial resources and think this is impossible without money. This finding leads to several conclusions.

First, the impression that civic activity is impossible without financial resources de-facto limits involvement of the youngest groups in local civic activism. Determining the real potential of youth involvement in social projects depends on making youth aware of opportunities and instruments available for them, both with or without financial support. Thus, the promotion of already existing programmes and exchange of knowledge about forms of local activism can significantly contribute to increasing youth confidence in their capacities. This conclusion leads to recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 4:

Recommendation 1: Prioritise local cultural and educational events and activities with young people's active engagement

Ukrainian youth widely report unrealised potential and strong interest in engagement in civic activities. They also report feeling hopeless and a lack of agency, especially in deprived local communities. The younger group (14–19 years old), particularly those in provincial areas and non-major cities, demonstrated a strong interest in active contribution to the organisation of activities with social impact. However, they lack the

instruments, funds, and know-how and thus need ongoing and consistent support. Effective measures to address this could include initiatives within the British Council Non-Formal Education programme (Youth Connect for Ukraine) that focus on skills development and project management.

Actions:

- Involve young people in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of youth evaluation youth programmes in Ukraine.
- Offer youth engagement courses, including project management, and participatory approaches as part of NFE offers in Ukraine.
- Advocate for participatory approaches with active youth engagement when it comes to youth programming.

Recommendation 2: Include survivor support components in all programmes

This recommendation addresses widely reported and continuous emotional stress among Ukrainian youth. The research reveals the devastating impact of emotional exhaustion on productivity, the ability to process new information, study, and work. Students and pupils, for instance, are struggling to cope with the emotional and psychological pressure to succeed in their studies. Existing programmes should be reviewed to include a compulsory professional psychological support component. This component should be built into any new programmes from the start.

Actions:

- Offer mental health support services to



staff, volunteers, and participants for programmes in Ukraine.

- Include a trauma recovery/resilience module in each programme wherever possible.
- Consider the impact of the war and trauma on each educational programme when preparing a course curriculum.

Recommendation 3: Provide additional support for vulnerable groups, enabling their participation in further activities

The needs and problems of vulnerable groups of youth often differ significantly from average needs. Their problems are more practical, and, in many cases, reflect a lack of financial resources. For instance, IDPs have problems with accommodation, money, clothes, and lack of gadgets. Youth with disabilities, especially those with physical mobility challenges, were in some instances physically trapped at home because of a lack of proper wheelchairs, shoes, or other disability-specific resources. Disabled access, already difficult in pre-war Ukraine, is worsening because of constant air alerts and strikes. This demographic might appear even more motivated to educate themselves and participate in various types of activities which contribute to the reconstruction of their communities. Still, it can be difficult to reach donors and access resources. Where programmes do not cover specific material and humanitarian needs, reaching out to various groups among the youth, cooperation with local NGOs, volunteer initiatives, and international humanitarian-focused donor organisations can be a solution. In this case, local, grassroots organisations might help frame and target assistance from international donors to local vulnerable groups in the first instance before recipients are involved in cultural, educational, or community-oriented projects.

Actions:

- Conduct a full 'inclusion feasibility study' before each programme or activity is initiated to screen for potential inclusion issues.

- Adjust programmes to the needs of vulnerable groups.
- Provide material and content support to vulnerable groups interested in participating in the programme or activity.
- Rely on local grassroots networks to better understand the best ways to support vulnerable groups.



Recommendation 4: Provide specific projects, and activities with for teaching staff, to improve the quality of education provision during wartime

Students, according to focus-group discussions, are more likely to connect their future plans with Ukraine in cases where they see higher education developing rather than stagnating. Young people believe that the continuation and improvement of education are crucial for their personal development and future opportunities. They emphasise the need for educational reforms, psychological support, and better infrastructure, such as shelters to ensure uninterrupted learning during air alerts. Teenagers, in particular, express a desire to stay in Ukraine, provided that the education system continues to evolve positively. They see their role in boosting social and cultural life through educational initiatives and community engagement. This optimism is tempered by the recognition that ongoing conflict and instability could disrupt their plans, but there is a strong underlying belief that a robust education system can be a foundation for a brighter future in Ukraine.

Schools in rural areas and small towns face significant challenges that are exacerbated during times of conflict and occupation. The study reveals critical gaps in these regions, including a severe shortage of qualified education personnel, insufficient resources to maintain educational quality, and a

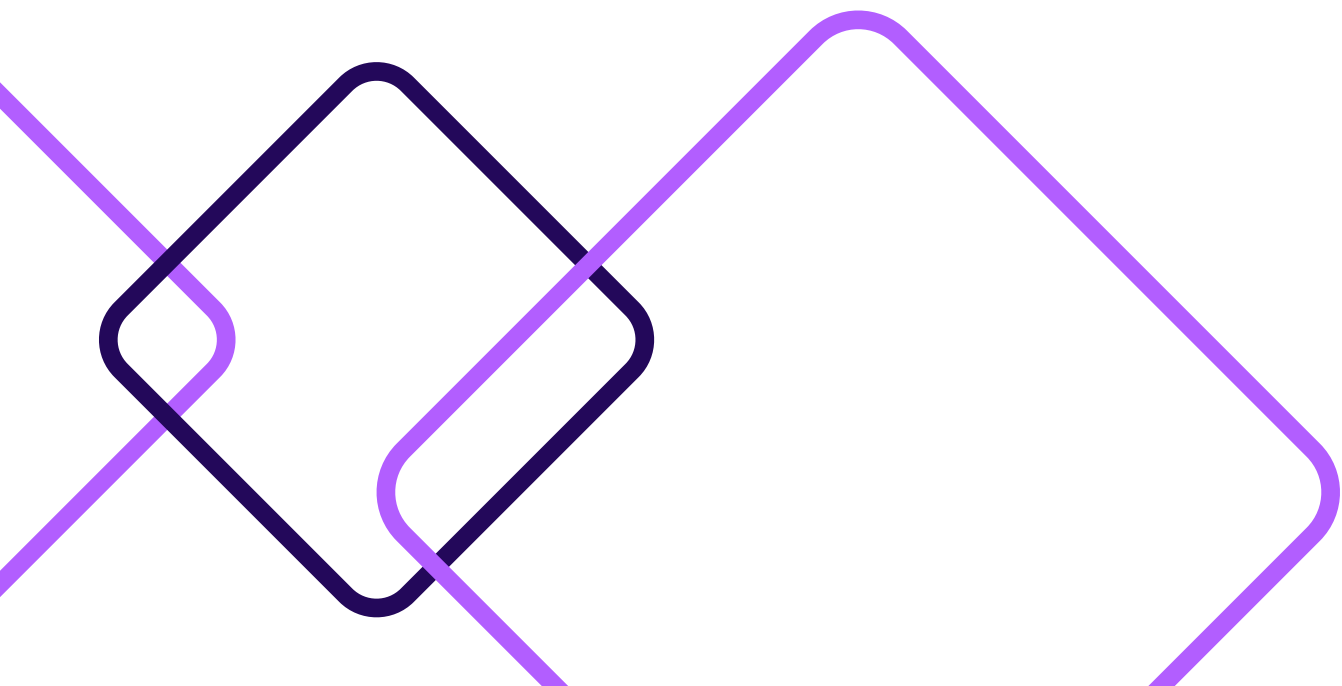
pervasive sense of stagnation compared to urban centres. These areas struggle with limited infrastructure and support systems, which hinders their ability to provide equitable educational opportunities to students. The motivation among educators in rural and provincial areas is notably lower due to the compounded effects of conflict-induced disruptions and longstanding neglect of educational development outside major cities. Young people report the impact teacher demotivation, frustration, and trauma has on them as pupils.

Another issue highlighted in the study is the plight of teachers who have been displaced from temporarily occupied territories and are unable to secure teaching positions in their new communities. This situation not only undermines the qualifications and experience of the teaching workforce but also poses a significant threat to Ukraine's future capacity to sustain its educational system post-occupation. The inability of these highly skilled educators to contribute to the educational process in their new locations creates a vacuum that impacts both the immediate learning environment and the long-term educational infrastructure of Ukraine.

Actions:

1) Programme sub-area: Schools

- Include professional psychological support to the participants involved in any cooperation project. This aims to help



teachers overcome continuous stress and enable their participation in the projects.

- Organise and support training and programmes for teachers that have been displaced so they can find teaching jobs in their new place of residence. These actions require cooperation with multiple stakeholders, such as local authorities; state administrations of the temporarily occupied areas (despite the occupation, these administrations are renewed and function on GCA and try to keep the record of school-related issues) and international organisations and local NGOs.

2) Programme sub-area: Higher education

- Enhance cooperation with academic staff in regions suffering most from the invasions and war-related damages (eastern, northeastern and southern Ukraine) to support their emotional well-being and to establish perspectives for the future for higher education in post-war Ukraine
- Showcase achievements and successes of local academics during the war to provide emotional support and share valuable experiences. This would involve creating platforms or events e.g. conferences, webinars, or online articles where local academics can share how they managed to continue teaching, researching, and producing outputs under challenging conditions.
- Roll out NFE programming in flexible and inclusive formats (pre-recorded videos, webinars) to provide inspiration and practical guidance for higher education staff, showing them how to apply NFE methods in their teaching practices.

Secondly, our findings also indicate that various stakeholders (donor organisations, international agencies, policy makers, local authorities, and non-governmental organisations), including the British Council, require a proactive approach to including this target audience in their projects. This is especially relevant for donor organisations and agencies, which tend to rely on calls for applications from potential beneficiaries and/or participants rather than on approaching these beneficiaries and inviting them. Supporting and raising awareness and investing in institutional capacities of youth organisations can fill in the gap between a high level of potential civic activism and the capacities and skills to put it into practice. These findings lead to recommendations 5, 6 and 7:



Recommendation 5: Where possible, online activities should be replaced or augmented with in-person activities

This recommendation addresses the fundamental and widespread problem of severed social ties, and lack of socialisation among students and youth. Young people across Ukraine report challenges in socialisation, networking, and peer support. However, online formats may be still feasible and meaningful for specific tasks like language courses for the age group above 20 years of age.

Actions:

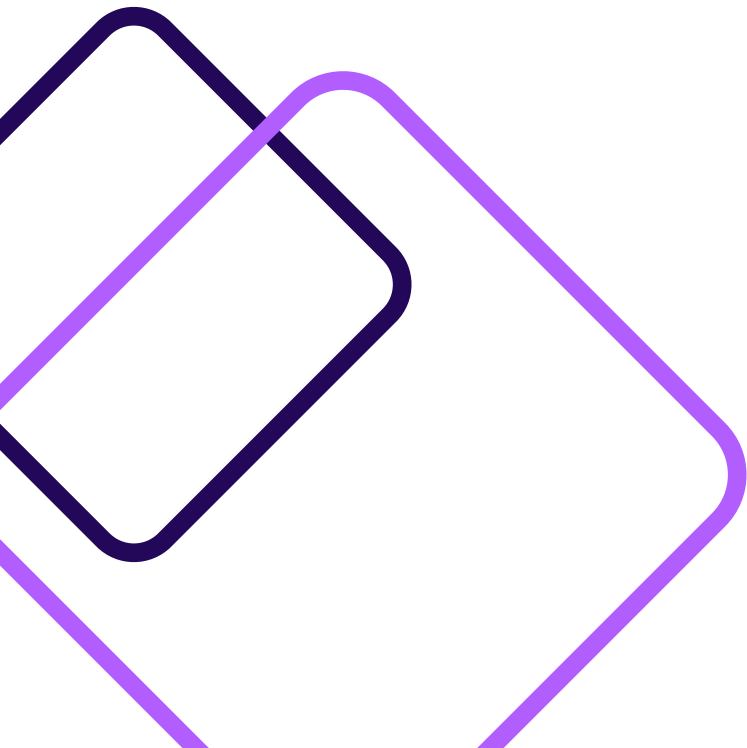
- Where possible, move to in-person activities.
- Where in-person activities are not possible locally, move to the nearest possible location, preferably within Ukraine to avoid international travel which is costly and can be exclusionary.
- Where possible, ensure flexibility of delivery mode, e.g. preparing materials for online delivery but also adaptable to in-person activities.
- For specific programmes with a regional (international) context, e.g. in arts programmes, stakeholders should ensure that ample resources are committed to activities in Ukraine that ensure accessibility and inclusion of young people with restricted mobility.

Recommendation 6: Plan cultural activities in Ukraine which reflect the growing trend to prioritise local culture

There is a growing need for updating knowledge on the cultural landscape in Ukraine and emerging trends, which impacts not only the culture domain, but also the social connections of the youth. Established cultural institutions in Ukraine have faced significant challenges, including loss of funding and operational difficulties due to security concerns. Many of these institutions, especially those in conflict-affected areas like eastern, northeastern, and southern Ukraine, have struggled to maintain regular programming and services. Despite the disruptions, there are emerging cultural trends that reflect the resilience and creativity of Ukrainian cultural practitioners. These include digital and online initiatives to reach broader audiences and cultural projects that address social issues exacerbated by the conflict, and collaborations that transcend geographical boundaries within Ukraine and with international partners. Based on the study results, the most interested in such projects might be pupils who are in their two final years at school or students at the universities (16–22 y.o.). They underscored the crucial changes in their cultural preferences and stronger dedication to Ukraine-centric culture trends as well as enthusiasm in participating in local cultural and educational projects.

Actions:

- Promote existing grant opportunities in Ukraine among the youth and/or supplement the arts programming area with new grants designed for youth impacted by the war.
- Focus on targeting a specific audience within the youth (i.e., youth of 16–22 y.o.).
- Offer project-management training to empower youth to develop and manage local cultural projects, especially in rural areas and small towns. The most enthusiastic of the youth reported a lack



of project management skills and a lack of understanding of how to raise funds for their ideas. If unable to assist with grants, the British Council might help with strengthening the capacities of ongoing youth initiatives.



Recommendation 7: Enhance free course offering for the secondary education level

Despite numerous free courses available to university students, there are relatively few opportunities for secondary school pupils or young people in NEET situations to attend free courses. The need for such courses is underscored by research indicating significant deterioration in quality of life and a lack of financial resources among many families, often struggling to afford even basic needs. This situation creates a dual challenge: while there is a clear demand for higher quality education, which younger respondents highlight as a significant concern, there is also a shortage of additional educational opportunities to address this need. Even if such opportunities exist or are created, if they are not free, many families will be unable to afford them, as teenagers frequently report their parents' lack of financial capacity. Therefore, offering free courses in essential subjects is crucial to ensure equitable access to quality education for all.

Actions:

- Consider enhancing their free course offerings to wider audiences, including to those at the secondary school level and those with no formal education. This can be implemented across all programming

areas – Arts, English, Education and Society/NFE.

- Offer curated access to diverse formats including webinars, MOOC, YouTube videos etc.
- Participate in knowledge exchange activities between education providers to share experiences of applying NFE methods and using flexible learning formats to benefit learners at all levels of ability.

To conclude, this study significantly contributes to the existing literature on higher education and youth perspectives in Ukraine during times of conflict. By exploring how students and young people perceive the role of education in shaping their future amidst ongoing war, it adds nuanced insights into their resilience, aspirations, and concerns. The findings highlight the crucial link between educational development and the retention of youth in Ukraine, shedding light on the necessity for reforms, psychological support mechanisms, and infrastructure improvements to sustain educational continuity during crises. However, gaps remain, particularly in understanding the long-term impacts of conflict on educational outcomes and the effectiveness of interventions aimed at supporting academic staff and students. Nevertheless, the study provides a foundation of knowledge that enhances confidence in drawing conclusions and formulating targeted recommendations for policymakers, international agencies, and local stakeholders.



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